

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 00239 142207Z

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9517

INFO PAN CANAL

US SOUTHCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 0239

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN, PN

SUBJ: GOP PLANS SHIFT TO MICROWAVE COMMUNICATIONS

BETWEEN ALBROOK AND TOCUMEN AIRPORT TO REPLACE CABLE

1. AT MEETING HELD AT FAA OFFICE, CAPT. DIEGO HURTADO, CHIEF OF THE NAVIGATION DEPARTMENT OF PANAMA'S CIVIL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (DAC), STATED THAT DAC HAS FUNDS TO INSTALL 20 CHANNELS MICROWAVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM FROM FAA'S AIRDROME CONTROL CENTER (ACC) TO TOCUMEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FOR USE OF FAA'S AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (ACT) SERVICE PROVIDED FOR THE PANAMA FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR). THIS WOULD INVOLVE INSTALLATION OF MICROWAVE TERMINAL EQUIPMENT AT FAA ACC AND A REFLECTOR ON ANCON HILL BY DAC WHICH WOULD THEREAFTER BE MAINTAINED BY FAA. MAINTENANCE COSTS ESTIMATED AT ABOUT \$10,000 PER YEAR. DAC IS NOW IN PROCESS OF PREPARING SPECIFICATIONS FOR EQUIPMENT. BIDS WILL BE SOLICITED ONLY FROM THREE AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS.

2. NEW MICROWAVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM WOULD REPLACE THE OLD COMMUNICATIONS CABLE INSTALLED BETWEEN ALBROOK AIR FORCE BASE AND TOCUMEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PURSUANT TO THE AGREEMENT RELATING TO A COMMUNICATIOS CABLE EFFECTED BY EXCHANGE OF NOTES SIGNED AT PANAMA MARCH 31, 1949. THE ORIGINAL 15 YEAR PERIOD ESTABLISHED

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PANAMA 00239 142207Z

IN THIS AGREEMENT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY EXTENDED ANOTHER 10

YEARS UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT. THIS EXTENSION WILL EXPIRE ON MARCH 31, 1974, BUT NEW MICRO-WAVE INSTALLATION WILL NOT BE OPERATIVE UNTIL ABOUT THE END OF THIS YEAR.

3. CAPT. HURTADO ASKED IF USG WOULD BE WILLING TO EXTEND COMMUNICATIONS CABLE AGREEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING CABLE FOR SUFFICIENT TIME TO PERMIT INSTALLATION OF MICROWAVE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM. HE INDICATED DAC WOULD REQUEST FOREIGN MINISTRY TO PROPOSE FIVE YEAR EXTENSION OF AGREEMENT.

4. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION AMONG PANCANAL, SOUTHCOM AND FAA INDICATE NO PROBLEMS IN ACCEPTANCE OF INSTALLATION OF MICROWAVE TERMINAL EQUIPMENT AT FAA ACC AND COMMUNICATIONS REFLECTOR ON ANCON HILL, BUT MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF ABOVE ENTITIES WILL BE HELD ON JANUARY 16 TO EXAMINE DAC'S PROPOSAL. PROVISION OF NECESSARY MAINTENANCE OF MICROWAVE EQUIPMENT APPEARS TO FALL WITHIN SCOPE OF SERVICES NECESSARY TO PROVIDE ATC FOR PANAMA FIR UNDER AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES AGREEMENT OF 1949 AND SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGE OF NOTES APRIL 5 AND APRIL 10, 1959. HOWEVER, EXISTING COMMUNICATIONS CABLE NOW LIES BURIED UNDER WIDENED PORTION OF TRANS-ISTHMIAN HIGHWAY, AND IF CABLE'S CONDITION HAS DETERIORATED OVER THE YEARS, MAINTENANCE COULD PROVE TO BE A PROBLEM. EMBASSY REQUESTS AUTHORITY TO PROCEED WITH EXTENSION OF THE CABLE AGREEMENT FOR A MAXIMUM PERIOD OF ONE YEAR, IF REQUESTED BY GOP.
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